CURRENT EVENTS RESEARCH TOPICS

CRIME AND LAW: Bombs in Brussels

**TOPIC:** The week after the arrest in Brussels of Salah Abdeslam, wanted in connection with last fall’s terrorist attacks in Paris, three bombs went off in Brussels. Two of them were at its airport and the third was on its subway system. Were these two events related? Who claimed responsibility for the attacks? What have investigators found out about the attackers and their accomplices? Has the airport reopened and has its security measures been changed as a result of the attacks?

**SEARCH TERMS:** Brussels AND (bombs OR attacks)

CIVICS, GOVERNMENT AND POLITICS: Primaries and Caucuses

**TOPIC:** The Republican presidential primaries have attracted attention as the field narrows and Donald Trump finds delegates for the opposition candidates coalescing behind Ted Cruz and John Kasich. On the Democratic site Bernie Sanders is slowly narrowing the gap with Hillary Clinton. What are some of the key issues now coming to prominence for each party and why? What are zombie delegates and how may they play a role in the Republican convention this year?

**SEARCH TERMS:** (Republican OR Republicans OR Democrat OR Democrats OR Democratic OR GOP) AND delegates

HEALTH: Zika Epidemic

**TOPIC:** The zika epidemic continues in Latin America. Where do they think this illness came from? What are some of the new things research has found out about it? How is work on a vaccine progressing? Has the link between zika and microcephaly been proven?

**SEARCH TERMS:** zika

SOCIAL STUDIES RESEARCH TOPICS

BUSINESS: Sea World Ends Orca Shows

**TOPIC:** Sea World has announced that it will end its Orca shows in 2017, however they will continue to hold Orcas in captivity. Animal rights groups have responded by stating the following analogy: This move is like no longer whipping lions in a circus act but keeping them locked inside cages for life. How does this analogy fit situation? Why has Sea World decided to stop the Orca shows? How do they intend to move forward in their work and containment of Orcas?

**SEARCH TERMS:** Sea World AND Orca

BUSINESS: Asian Merger

**TOPIC:** Taiwanese company Foxconn has purchased Japanese firm Sharp Corp. Foxconn is best known as the manufacturer of Apple products. Sharp is an electronics firm. Why was Sharp struggling in the market today? What is Foxconn most known for? How does this deal impact Apple?

**SEARCH TERMS:** Foxconn AND Sharp Corp.

BUSINESS: iPhone Security vs. Federal Government

**TOPIC:** Apple, Inc. would like to know how the FBI was able to break into the iPhone of one of the San Bernardino murderers. Normally, the government is required to disclose technology security flaws so that companies can address fixes so that consumers’ data is protected. What are the advantages and disadvantages of the FBI disclosing how it cracked the iPhone security system? How can individuals’ rights to privacy be protected while allowing the government to pursue criminal investigations?

**SEARCH TERMS:** Apple AND tech*
CIVICS, GOVERNMENT AND POLITICS: Viva Cuba!
TOPIC: President Obama made a state visit to Cuba and Argentina. He was the first president to visit Cuba since Calvin Coolidge. What was truly historic about his visit to Cuba? How was he received by Cuban President Castro? What was controversial about the timing of his visit to Argentina? What documents did the U.S. government promise to release about Argentine’s recent history?
SEARCH TERMS: Obama AND (Cuba OR Argentina)

CIVICS, GOVERNMENT AND POLITICS: Zuma in Trouble
TOPIC: President Zuma of South Africa has been implicated in a scandal over the sacking of his finance minister in December. It is claimed that this was done to further the Gupta brothers’ interests in the media, mining and air travel. What other members of the ANC have alleged that the brothers offered them the job of finance minister? What has Mr. Zuma’s defense of his actions been? What other problems beset South Africa at this time? What recent ruling by South Africa’s top court may affect Zuma’s presidency?
SEARCH TERMS: South Africa AND Zuma AND Gupta brothers

CIVICS, GOVERNMENT AND POLITICS: Voting to Stay the Same
TOPIC: New Zealanders voted to retain their current flag, which has the British Union Jack as part of its design and has been in use since 1902, rather than switch to a design of a silver fern on a black background. This design was selected from 10,000 entries. What were the criticisms of the old design? What were some of the criticisms of the new one?
SEARCH TERMS: New Zealand AND flag

CIVICS, GOVERNMENT AND POLITICS: Supreme Court Nomination
TOPIC: With the sudden death of Supreme Court Justice Antonin Scalia, President Obama has nominated Merrick Garland to replace Scalia. There has been debate as to whether the incoming judge should be named by the sitting president or his successor, who will be determined with the next presidential election. What does the constitution say about the replacement of any Supreme Court justice? What grounds do those who want the next president to make the nomination have? What basis do politicians have who insist that Obama should choose the next Supreme Court Justice?
SEARCH TERMS: Supreme Court nomination AND constitution

CRIME AND LAW: Supreme Court Hears Abortion Law Cases
TOPIC: The Supreme Court has been hearing oral arguments involving Texas law. The case asks if the law, which would go into effect soon, should uphold that Texas should be required to give doctors admitting rights to hospitals, and whether clinics will need to upgrade their facilities to hospital like standards. This requirement would shut down many of the Texas abortion clinics. What are the arguments for this law? What are the arguments against it? Why is this a particularly difficult time for the Supreme Court to be hearing a case such as this?
SEARCH TERMS: Supreme Court AND abortion

CRIME AND LAW: New Orleans Violence
TOPIC: Although there has been a recent burst in violence, and shootings continue to be a major problem in New Orleans, the murder rate has finally started to subside. What issues affect the high rates of violence in New Orleans? What types of responses seem to help reduce the crime levels? How much are guns a player in the high rates of murder?
SEARCH TERMS: New Orleans AND violence
ECONOMICS: Economic Recovery
TOPIC: The economic recovery since the recession ending in 2009 is mixed. In terms of job growth, some states have seen double-digit growth in jobs while others are still at the recession levels of opportunities. What are the factors at play in those areas which have enjoyed growth and prosperity? What are the issues that are affecting those areas that have shown very little growth?
SEARCH TERMS: job* AND recovery

ECONOMICS: Debt Struggle Ends
TOPIC: Argentina’s senate has agreed to pay its debt to the hedge funds that sued it in New York City after it defaulted in 2001 on $132 billion in loans. These funds bought the loans up cheaply and are set to gain a huge return on their investments. The agreement is one result of the change in leadership in Argentina. What was Argentina’s defense during its trial? What part of the ruling especially favored these funds? Is this result good for the holders of sovereign debt?
SEARCH TERMS: Argentina AND sovereign debt AND vulture funds

EDUCATION: Award Winning Teacher
TOPIC: Hanan Hroub, a teacher from the West Bank, has won the Global Teacher Prize from the Varkey Foundation. Why did the Varkey Foundation choose Hroub? What does she teach and what are the ages of her students? What are her teaching methods?
SEARCH TERMS: Hanan Hroub

EDUCATION: By All Means
TOPIC: In a bold multiyear initiative, the Harvard Graduate School of Education has launched a new endeavor to eliminate the link between children’s socioeconomic status and educational achievement. Acknowledging that public schools cannot do the job of educating all students for success, educators, superintendents and mayors from six cities will work together in rethinking how child wellbeing and equity can be better fostered within the education system.
SEARCH TERMS: ‘By All Means’ AND Harvard

HISTORY: ‘We Can Do It!’
TOPIC: Rosie the Riveter, the cultural icon representing American women who worked in factories and shipyards while the men were off at war, was honored in Washington DC. These women produced war supplies and bombers used in World War II. What does Rosie the Riveter symbolize in American history? What does the well-known image of Rosie flexing her muscle with the words ‘We Can Do It’ meant to evoke in the viewer? How did women feel about shifting from working in factories to going back home after the war ended?
SEARCH TERMS: Rosie the Riveter

HISTORY: An Anniversary
TOPIC: The 100th anniversary of the Easter Uprising has recently occurred. This was an armed attack on the British garrison in Dublin and the takeover of several key points in the city during World War I. Who led the uprising and what did they hope to achieve? What happened to the Irish forces? What happened to their leaders? What was the ultimate outcome of this event?
SEARCH TERMS: Ireland AND Easter Uprising

SOCIAL ISSUES: Refugee Agreement
TOPIC: The EU and Turkey have come to an agreement about the immigrants who are in Greece. They will be sent back to Turkey. This has effectively turned their refugee centers into detention camp. How are aid agencies reacting to this agreement? What did Turkey get in exchange for their agreement? Does this seem like a workable solution to you? If not, what would be a way to proceed?
SEARCH TERMS: EU AND Turkey AND immigrants OR refugees
SOCIAL ISSUES: North Carolina Governor Signs Controversial Transgender Law

TOPIC: Bill 2 now bars local municipalities from making their own laws barring discrimination in public places based on gender identity and sexual orientation. Public schools, government agencies and college campuses now require multi-occupancy restrooms and locker rooms be used only by people based on their ‘biological sex’ stated on their birth certificate. What impact will this law have on the LGBTQ communities of North Carolina? How will the requirements of this law be managed at the local level? How have politicians and civic organizations outside of North Carolina responded to the passing of Bill 2?

SEARCH TERMS: North Carolina AND transgender

ENVIRONMENT: Scott Kelly Returns to Earth

TOPIC: Scott Kelley has spent 520 days in space, more than any other American. Most recently, he spent a year in orbit. Along with the findings about his travels, scientists will be looking at the prolonged effect that space travel has on the human body by running twin tests on Scott Kelley to his identical twin brother, Mark (who stayed on Earth last year). What are the genetic factors that will be compared? What are some of the essential questions that the researchers are studying? What are some of the independent and dependent variables that will be utilized in the research ahead?

SEARCH TERMS: Scott Kelly

ENVIRONMENT: Stay at Home Storks

TOPIC: Storks from the Iberian Peninsula traditionally flew to Africa or India in the winter. Recent research has shown that many now stay put, as there is enough food in the landfills of the countries of Spain and Portugal to support them through the season. What other ways have landfills caused storks to change their behavior? Will the closing of landfills cause storks to resume their migratory ways or will they adapt in other ways?

SEARCH TERMS: Storks AND landfills

HEALTH: Opioid Epidemic

TOPIC: President Obama has prioritized fighting the overdosing epidemic due to use of opioids: a class of drugs which includes prescription pain medications and heroin. In 2014, over 28,000 deaths occurred due to opiate overdoses. What approaches are being sought to address the epidemic? What treatments are currently available for those who suffer from addiction?

SEARCH TERMS: opioid OR opiate

SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY: Eye in the Sky

TOPIC: Satellite infrared images that showed possible human habitations may have led archaeologists to a second Viking community in North America, on the southwestern side of Newfoundland. Sarah H. Parcak, who has used satellite imagery to track looting of sites in Egypt, led the team whose excavations discovered proof of iron working there. Where is this in relation to the Viking site discovered in 1960? Why is iron working seen as proof of Viking presence?

SEARCH TERMS: Newfoundland AND Vikings

SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY: Daylight Savings

TOPIC: The benefits and downfalls of moving the clock ahead in the Spring and back in the Fall are being debated. What is the basis of daylight savings? What is it intended to do? What are the benefits? What are the downfalls? How does the turning ahead and behind of the clock affect our health?

SEARCH TERMS: Daylight Saving
SPORTS RESEARCH TOPICS

SPORTS: U.S. Women Soccer Players File Lawsuit
TOPIC: A group of professional soccer players from the U.S. Women’s National Team have filed a lawsuit against the U.S. Soccer Federation seeking equal pay to match their male counterparts. What is the discrepancy between the pay of the male soccer players and the female soccer players in the U.S. Soccer Federation and what are the key arguments for either side of the case? What are some other sports where there is a notable discrepancy in pay between genders and what has been done about it?
SEARCH TERMS: Soccer Federation AND women AND lawsuit AND (pay OR paid)

SPORTS: A Change of Saddles
TOPIC: Victoria Pendleton, a British Olympic cycling medalist, undertook the challenge of learning first to ride and then to be a jump jockey in a year with a goal of racing at the Cheltenham Festival. She finished fifth in the Foxhunter Chase, a race for amateurs. Who set her this challenge and why did she accept? How did many racing professionals react to this challenge? Who trained her in becoming a jockey, and how did they feel about this race?
SEARCH TERMS: Victoria Pendleton

SPORTS: Johan Cruyff
TOPIC: Johan Cruyff was a Dutch football star Johan Cruyff. He is thought to have been one of the greatest to play the game, and he had a successful career as a manager. Where did he play and what made him a special player? Where did he manage and how good were his teams? What championships in both league and international play did he win? What was his World Cup career like?
SEARCH TERMS: Johan Cruyff

SPORTS: Suspended
TOPIC: Maria Sharapova tested positive for a newly banned drug at the Australian Open and has been suspended from the tennis tour. What was the substance and why was it banned? What was her excuse for not knowing about the drug’s change of status? What did other players think about her use of a banned substance? How long could she be away from the tour?
SEARCH TERMS: Maria Sharapova

SPORTS: March Madness
TOPIC: March Madness is an informal term describing the NCAA college basketball tournament that plays out mostly through the month of March and into April. What teams have made the Final Four? What about this year’s March Madness was leaked on Twitter and what was the impact of the leak?
SEARCH TERMS: basketball AND March Madness

SPORTS: Women’s NCAA Basketball Championships
TOPIC: Syracuse University and the University of Connecticut women’s basketball teams will be competing for this Year’s NCAA basketball championships. What are the strengths and weaknesses of each team, and how do they key players match up against their counterparts on the rival team? What are the basketball histories of each team?
SEARCH TERMS: basketball AND NCAA AND (women OR women's)

SPORTS: Peyton Manning
TOPIC: Quarterback Peyton Manning has retired from professional football after 18 seasons in the NFL. What two teams did he play for and what were some of his career highlights with each team? What were his key strengths that made him so successful, and what are some examples of plays that illustrate these skills?
SEARCH TERMS: Peyton Manning
SPORTS: Iditarod
TOPIC: Dallas Seavey has won his fourth Iditarod in 5 years. What are the key skills that he brings to the sport that give him an edge over the other mushers? What unfortunate accident happened in this year’s Iditarod outside the village of Nulato and what were the circumstances and legal outcome?
SEARCH TERMS: Iditarod AND Dallas Seavey

ARTS AND LITERATURE RESEARCH TOPICS

FILM AND TELEVISION: The People vs. O.J. Simpson
TOPIC: The first season of the cable television station FX series American Crime Story is The People vs. O.J., a docudrama on the murder trial of former football star O.J. Simpson. What have the critics said about the acting and directing of the show? What are some areas where the show may be different from real events?
SEARCH TERMS: FX AND The People vs. O.J. Simpson

FILM AND TELEVISION: Jan Nemec
TOPIC: Jan Nemec was a Czech film director. A member of the Czech new wave of filmmakers in the 1960s, his allegorical film “Report on the Party and Guests” ultimately led to his being banned from filmmaking by the Communist regime. What were some of his other films and how were they received? How did he spend his years of exile? What had he been doing since his return to his homeland?
SEARCH TERMS: Jan Nemec

FINE ARTS AND ARCHITECTURE: Zaha Hadid
TOPIC: Iraqi-British architect Zaha Hadid was the first woman to win the Pritzker Prize. What notable buildings did she design? What was distinctive about her designs? Beyond the Pritzker, what other honors and awards did she win? Do her buildings look appealing?
SEARCH TERMS: Zaha Hadid

FINE ARTS AND ARCHITECTURE: Robert Mapplethorpe
TOPIC: Exhibits of the work of photographer Robert Mapplethorpe at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art and The J. Paul Getty Museum as well as an HBO documentary and a new book on Mapplethorpe have made him a headlining artist again. What are the strong talents that he brought to photography? What was controversial about some of his photographs and how did it make news in the late 1980s?
SEARCH TERMS: Robert Mapplethorpe

LITERATURE: Lab Girl
TOPIC: American geochemist and geobiologist Hope Jahren has written a book called Lab Girl about her work and life. What work has she been most acclaimed for and what is most significant and impressive about it? What are the critics saying about her book and what are scientists saying is important about it?
SEARCH TERMS: Hope Jahren AND Lab Girl

LITERATURE: Jim Harrison
TOPIC: Jim Harrison was the author of the popular novella Legends of the Fall. What authors has he been compared to and why? What was Legends of the Fall about and what were the qualities that impressed the critic and readers of the book? What is a novella and what are some other famous novellas?
SEARCH TERMS: Jim Harrison AND Legends of the Fall
LITERATURE: Imre Kertesz
TOPIC: Imre Kertesz was a Hungarian Nobel laureate. As a boy he was imprisoned by the Nazis in first the Auschwitz and later Buchenwald concentration camps. His novels reflected that part of his life. What was his career like under the Communist Party regime in Hungary? For what works was he honored with the Nobel Prize?
SEARCH TERMS: Imre Kertesz

PERFORMING ARTS: Academy of Country Music Awards
TOPIC: Jason Adlean won Entertainer of the Year at this year’s Academy of Country Music Awards, but Chris Stapleton was the big winner overall. What was the music by Adlean and what were the qualities in it that impressed the voters to give him this win? What are some other key successes in his career? What awards did Stapleton win and what were the qualities in his music that impressed the voters?
SEARCH TERMS: (Country Music Awards OR CMA Awards) AND (Adlean OR Stapleton)

PERFORMING ARTS: The Fifth Beatle
TOPIC: George Martin was the British record producer who produced the Beatles albums along with many other musicians. How did he get into the record business and who had he worked with before the Beatles? What were his contributions to their records and their success? What was his career like after they broke up?
SEARCH TERMS: George Martin

PERFORMING ARTS: The Father
TOPIC: French playwright Florian Zeller has brought his popular 2012 play The Father to Broadway after success in London and Paris. What is the play about and what impresses the critics most about it? What are some other plays he has written and what are some common themes in his plays? What are some of the more acclaimed novels he has written and what impressed the critics most about them?
SEARCH TERMS: The Father AND Florian Zeller

PEOPLE RESEARCH TOPICS

PEOPLE: Nancy Reagan
TOPIC: Former First Lady Nancy Reagan was the wife of the late U.S. President and governor of California Ronald Reagan. What was her contribution to battling the drug problem in the United States? What were some of the changes that she made to the look and design of the White House? What are some examples where she encouraged her husband on policy or otherwise influenced events in the White House?
SEARCH TERMS: Nancy Reagan

PEOPLE: Patty Duke
TOPIC: Patty Duke was a popular television and film star. What are some of her most celebrated roles in film and television and what most impressed the critics? What ailment did she have and took on as a cause for aiding others with it starting in the 80s?
SEARCH TERMS: Patty Duke

PEOPLE: Rob Ford
TOPIC: Rob Ford was the former mayor of Toronto Rob. What ended his political career? However, he might be best remembered for a scandal during his term of office. When did he run for the mayoralty and what were his issues? What policies did he pursue while in office and how effective were they? What was the scandal that occurred while he was in office and how did he respond to it?
SEARCH TERMS: Toronto AND Rob Ford
PEOPLE: The Scots Makar
TOPIC: Jackie Kay has been named the national poet of Scotland. The official title is The Scots Makar. Who were the original Makars? How old is this office in Scotland? Who else has held it? What is his poetry like?
SEARCH TERMS: Jackie Kay OR Scots Makar

PEOPLE: Calvin Borel
TOPIC: Three-time Kentucky Derby winner jockey Calvin Borel has announced his retirement from horse racing. What were the key strengths of his riding technique? What were some of his other big wins?
SEARCH TERMS: Calvin Borel